

Just like all employees, people who have disabilities want to do a good job, appreciate constructive supervision, enjoy new challenges and want to get ahead. One way for employers to retain employees is to establish career development plans for all employees, including those who have disabilities. Typical programs include goal setting, team building, networking, mentoring, performance evaluations, leadership opportunities, supervisory and management development, and professional skills training.

Use personal development goals to challenge employees

Like all employees, individuals with disabilities also must take responsibility for their career development. Employees should continually seek out new education, training, and information. They should keep up on the latest information in the field, network, and volunteer for new assignments.

- People with disabilities have career goals just like any employee.
- Ensure that employees with disabilities are given full consideration for inclusion in upward mobility programs and that they are aware of career counseling.
- Sit down with employees and talk about goals.
- Identify role models and mentors for employees with disabilities in that process.

Utilize reassignments to advance employees

Employers can use reassignments as a means of on-the-job training to enhance promotion opportunities for employees with disabilities. Give employees with disabilities opportunities not only to work with others on group projects, but also when appropriate, to take on leadership roles.

Mentoring and job shadowing

All staff can benefit from the guidance of a more experienced employee. Mentoring is an on-the-job educational process that provides opportunities for professional development and growth for both the mentor and the mentee and is an excellent way to foster personal, professional development in the workplace. Mentors provide many benefits:

- Broadened perspectives about the transferability of skills and interests, as well as future career directions to consider.
- Motivation to take calculated risks.
- Advice on the “politics” of dealing with human relationships within the organization.
- Honest and constructive feedback about problem areas.
- Coaching on technical, interpersonal, and management skills.
- Encouragement.
- Networking contacts, references, and introductions.